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Social Media Usages in Small Not-For-Profit Organizations

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Social Media Usages in Small Not-For-Profit Organizations

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Capstone Project

University of Kentucky Martin School of Public Policy and Administration

Spring 2018

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I. Executive Summary

Effective social media management takes time, effort, and intentionality. Small not-for-profit organizations would benefit from doing this, but often have difficulty with being able to do so. In order to find out how small not-for-profit organizations use their social media and how social media could best be used to accomplish their mission, the following research questions were asked: What communications policies and procedures are followed by small not-for-profits organizations? Are the current social media practices of these organizations effective? What are the primary needs of these organizations in terms of social media and how can they be addressed?

In order to address these questions, relevant existing literature was reviewed, six small not-for-profit organizations were randomly selected, social media data was collected and analyzed concerning these six organizations, and the managers of these six small not-for-profit organizations were interviewed. Literature strongly supports the notion that social media management is of great importance for the success of an organization. The data from the 6 not-for-profit organizations' social media accounts show some areas do not match recommended usage while managers offered insights into how social media content is produced. By bringing the importance of social media management to the managers' attentions and providing them with up-to-date solutions to common problems, small not-for-profit organizations will be better equipped to fulfill their missions.

Key findings include: unsuccessfully satisfying ideal balance between types of posts (shares and originals), organizations under use appropriate platforms, organizations fail to post at the ideal rate in order to increase interactions, content is not ideally strategized to align with recommended purpose

II. Introduction to the Problem

Organizational communications policies and procedures, especially in terms of social media outreach methods, have major and growing implications on an organization's success as technology shifts the way people communicate. Not-for-profit organizations' communication methods must involve stakeholders with whom they need to engage and build strong relationships. Most not-for-profit managers acknowledge the importance of having effective communication policies and procedures in order to best carry out the organization's mission. However, most not-for-profit managers, especially those of small not-for-profit organizations, do not feel they properly know how to create and implement effective communication policies and procedures surrounding social media use or how to assess their organization's current communications policies and procedures (Hou and Lampe, 2018). One of the root causes of this problem is the lack of an approachable, easily understandable, up-to-date guide designed for this purpose being presented to and then used by managers.

Additionally, small not-for-profits are often limited in human and capital resources. While larger not-for-profit organizations are more likely to have a hired staff member or a department of staff members whose primary focus and training is on effective communications, such as via staff members who have an educational background in communications. Large organizations are less likely to encounter the restrictiveness of the lack of funds that exists in many small not-for-profits. This often leads to the managers of these small organizations being responsible for a variety of tasks, including communications (Miller, 2014). It is also noteworthy that these managers often lack a communications educational background, as such a background has been found to be helpful and relevant, however it is not a requirement for gaining the position (Renz, 2018). This root source of insufficiency makes proper communications

management even more difficult and time consuming. Consequently, a guide to organizational social media usage would help to provide knowledge necessary for a not-for-profit's success in today's connected society. The complexity of proper social media management can cause managers to shift their focus away from communications, even though it should be a high priority (Lake, 2018). Also, not-for-profit managers of small organizations are typically pulled in many different directions and simply do not have the time needed to research the best methods of communication policies and procedures, which then makes it impossible to fully implement high quality methods (Miller, 2014). This burden then reduces the ability of managers to accomplish their wide range of responsibilities, which impacts not only the managers themselves, but also the other employees and, therefore the entire organization as whole, including the volunteers, donors, and other stakeholders.

While there is literature on recommended ways for organizations to approach social media, there does not seem to be a guide that is easy to understand and implement that walks small non-for-profit managers through strategies for using social media in a way that caters to their challenges specifically. There is also a gap between said pre-existing guides and the managers, as the vast majority of the managers whom I interviewed do not use any guides to make their organizational social media accounts effective. This will be discussed in more detail in the analysis and findings section. The organizations interviewed for the purposes of this capstone were Hearts Inc., Ten Kids Inc., Lexington Community Radio, Lexington Philharmonic, Green Forests Work Inc., and Explorium of Lexington. They were interviewed in the spring of 2019, and were randomly selected, small 501(c)(3) organizations in Lexington, Kentucky. This is discussed in further details in the research design. It would be beneficial if many communications topics were directly covered in the perspective of not-for-profit

organizations. The creation and presentation of this resource intentionally directed towards managers of small not-for-profit organizations and designed in terms of their problems would help to relieve a burden while better achieving the mission and goals of the organization. This has the potential to improve management functions and thus lead to the betterment of these crucial organizations which also intend to have positive impacts on their greater communities if they can effectively fulfill their missions.

The underuse of such a resource is a not only a problem due to the strain on the employees, but also because the lack of effective communications impacts the organizations' abilities to engage effectively with stakeholders who are supporters of the organization. This could include current and future donors, volunteers, and employees. Essentially, a lack of public awareness of both the needs of an organization and the services an organization provides stunts organizational growth in terms of small not-for-profits.

III. Literature Review

As social media continue to increase in popularity and usage within daily life (Dopson, 2018), the importance of effective communications continues to grow within all organizations that seek to maintain positive relations with stakeholders. I aim to provide guidance on effective communication policies for small not-for-profit organizations by defining what constitutes a "small not-for-profit" organization, examining communications strategies currently employed by organizations, examining recommendations and guides in existing literature, and discussing how not-for-profits should evaluate the effectiveness of their social media usage.

Defining the type of "small not-for-profit organization"

Not-for-profit organizations vary in size greatly, so what may seem like a small not-for-profit to one person could be perceived as quite large to another. Therefore, it is necessary to determine a specific scope for this study. According to Frailey (2017), “The vast majority of nonprofits are small, grassroots organizations.” Frailey defines this as having a yearly budget of less than \$1 million. Furthermore, the U.S. Small Business Administration categorizes organizations by industry according to size as defined by millions of dollars. The maximum amount of yearly receipts allowed for an organization to qualify as “small” within the “civic and social organizations” industry is \$7.5 million annually (p. 39). Essentially, there is no one set way to define “small.” I will narrow my organizational scope to define “small” organizations as those with annual revenue of less than \$1 million, as this still encompasses many organizations, without providing a massive revenue gap, and gap in resources, within the scale of selected organizations.

Furthermore, not-for-profit organizations also differ beyond just size, as there are various types of tax-exempt 501(c) organizations. The areas of function of 501(c) organizations cover a wide range of missions. However, 74% of all of these are 501(c)(3) organizations (Sweeney, 2017). To specifically define the types of organizations I will be examining, I will only be looking at not-for-profit organizations that are 501(c)(3) organizations, inclusive of all areas of function. 501(c)(3) organizations differ from other 501(c) organizations because they are charitable in nature, and must file a form 990 with the IRS. Other 501(c) organization types also receive some tax-exemptions but have different missions outside of public charity, such as 501(c)(4) organizations, which are social welfare organizations and employee associations (Arneal, 2015). This research will be focused on small not-for-profit organizations because these are the organizations that are commonly underfunded and understaffed (Davenport, 2019),

meaning they are more likely to lack communications specific employees. Also, because the vast majority of not-for-profit organizations are small in scope, this research will be applicable to a large number of organizations.

Communications strategies currently employed by not-for-profit organizations

Before exploring how small not-for-profits should develop their communications policies and procedures, it is important to first examine how they are currently using communications and to narrow and define the scope on what types of communications are being examined. Social media communications are increasing in importance and relevance, and offer many advantages, such as the ability to interact with stakeholders, over other types of communication. Because of social media's importance to not-for-profits' communications, social media will be the focus. According to Alhabash and Ma (2017), the most popular social media platforms are Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Therefore, when examining social media, studies primarily focus on these media platforms, therefore these three platforms will be the focus of this research.

In order to get a better understanding of how not-for-profits are using social media communications, Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) examined the 100 largest not-for-profit organizations' Twitter feeds and found that there are three primary functions of micro-blogging Twitter updates: "information sources, community builders, and promoters and mobilizers" (p. 349). It was found that organizations primarily employed the "informational" style (p. 349). Informational style means that the Twitter updates provide sources of information that the reader would find helpful or engaging. Community builders include maintaining relations with current stakeholders, such as by thanking them and making connections with other users and organizations. Promoters and mobilizers are a call to action to promote the organization, whether

through volunteering, monetary donations, or attending an event. These primary functions were used to categorize function/purpose of posts made by selected organizations in this study.

Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) also support the notion that there is still significant room for improvement in regard to how Twitter is used within these organizations by showing that they struggle with balancing the types of functions Twitter is used for (p. 349). Therefore, if the 100 largest not-for-profit organizations, which typically have increased funding and more employees when compared to smaller organizations, still often struggle to implement the various types of social media communication methods effectively, then small not-for-profit organizations likely experience the same struggles but to a greater degree, as they have fewer employees and less hiring capabilities.

Examining the existing literature regarding not-for-profit social media usage recommendations

One recommendation from a social media guide from Davenport (2019) is to initially determine the target audience of the messages. According to Davenport (2019), personas can be used by an organization to specify the intended target audience. This means that they create imaginary persons that embody and represent different target audience populations. They then think of that one specific persona when targeting that type of audience when creating posts. This is a crucial first step for organizations because it will help to shape the type of content published based on what will be perceived as most engaging by the target audience. This seems especially key when creating social media procedures for not-for-profits, because these organizations often have a wide variety of stakeholder types, ranging from donors, current beneficiaries, future beneficiaries, and volunteers.

According to Dopson (2018), assessing the target audience can help to determine both the content of the posts and what platforms should be used to deliver the content. The choosing of the proper platforms is another recommendation that overlaps with the choosing of the target audience. “Every social media channel has a different purpose, functionality, and audience” (Gardiner, 2017). Instagram is a photo based platform that is designed for showcasing past events. Facebook has built in features for promoting taking actions, such as through attending events or donating funds. Twitter is designed for short and frequent written informational updates. Since small not-for-profit managers lack time and resources that they can dedicate to social media, choosing a manageable number of effective platforms is an important step. Choosing a manageable number of platforms should be done by starting with one platform, and then assessing how much additional time could be allotted for additional platform(s) (Vertical Response, 2018). Considering the innate features of the platforms as discussed above should be done in alignment with the determined target audience.

Another common recommendation is to effectively utilize hashtags. The literature reveals that “One to two is good; any more, and your post may actually start to lose interactions.” (Gardiner, 2017). Using hashtags is a way to link the organization to a relative audience. One specific recommendation is to use trending hashtags so that the posts will appear when people search for popular hashtags (Dopson, 2018). Tracking whether or not trending or relative hashtags were utilized in relation to the time of the posting is beyond the scope of this capstone. However, hashtags were read when the social media feeds were analyzed to contribute to understanding the purpose of the posts and the projected target audiences. Using effective hashtags is a skill that should be perfected by the social media managers of the organizations by considering the target audience and purpose of the post along with the trending content.

A final recommendation is to utilize social media scheduling tools. These are helpful because they allow managers to create posts in advance during a time that is convenient, and to select the time that the content will then be posted on the social media platform. According to Information Technology Patent News (2015) “...scheduling maximizes the predicted response to each post” (p.1). This is because it allows for more thought and strategy to be put into the posts. Guevara (2018) reviews different social media scheduling tools. The four that are recommended as options are Hootsuite, TweetDeck, Postfity, and Buffer. While they all have versions that have subscription fees, they also have free versions (Guevara, 2018). These versions would likely suffice for the needs of a small not-for-profit organization.

How (with what research strategies/designs) should small not-for-profits determine whether a communication policy is effective

The literature reflects the notion that, unfortunately, many not-for-profits, especially small ones, do not take measures to determine whether a communication policy is effective. However, there are some methods within the literature that could be used to determine effectiveness. The method of “audience, message, vehicle” as outlined by Williamson (2009, p. 9) is a recommended way to create effective communications, therefore evaluating an organization’s social media posts against these three aspect helps to determine the posts’ aim at the target audience, content, and platform. Within this strategy, first the demographics of the target audience need to be determined in order to gain a sense of who the readers are. Next, the message that the audience should receive must be determined. Lastly, the mediums and methods (vehicles) that should be used to deliver the message to the target audience should be determined (Williamson, 2009). This method is cited from 2009, which is relatively out of date in terms of

literature, but for this particular topic it is not irrelevant, as this is addressed within the source: “As long as it’s aimed at a measurable result, the time-honored “audience, message, vehicle” formula has lost none of its relevance” (Williamson, 2009, p. 9). Literature discusses that examining data from an organization’s social media is important because it helps to determine how outsiders feel about the direction that the organization is taking (Immonen, Paakkonen, & Ovaska, 2015). By knowing this, organizations can adjust their usage accordingly.

Whether or not the social media communications are achieving the goals within the organization’s mission is also very important. “A good marketing or communications strategy should flow in a tight logical sequence, starting with a very explicitly articulated objective or goal, all the way through the tactics and accountability. The more measurable the goal, the better...” (Williamson, 2009, p. 9). Essentially, the effectiveness of an organization’s communications policies should be measured in the light of how well they help the organization achieve its mission through specific goals set for communications. Cuadros (2016) echoes the importance of this audience-centered strategy: “Craft audience-centered messages- Whether you’re reaching out to prospective donors, recurring donors, volunteers or employees, make sure that you *know* your audience. Familiarize yourself with what they’re interested in and how they like to be communicated with.” Developing a relationship with users online will “Not only motivate user participation... but also enable social commerce activities” (Yang, Tang, Dai, Yang, & Jiang, 2013, p. 74) which can directly contribute to achieving an organization’s goals. Essentially, the effectiveness of communications should be examined from the perspective of the target audience, and how they are receiving the messages to achieve the set goals. This is best quantified through the interactions with the posts from the audience. Interactions include actions

taken by the audience, such as likes, comments, and shares. This supports using these as indicators of the success of individual posts and of the account.

Social media communications are a very important aspect of managing a not-for-profit organization, as they can be used to build and strengthen relations with many important stakeholders. However, since it has been found that not-for-profit organizations have room for improvement within their social media implementations, it is crucial that the organizations strategically manage this. The strategy used should further the mission of the organization, and this should be evaluated through the perspectives of the audience, the content of the messages, and vehicle of delivery to ensure that the communications strategy adapts as needed.

IV. Research Design

My research examines small not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organizations, as defined previously, in terms of their needs within the field of social media communications. The research questions that are focused on in this project are:

- *What communications policies and procedures are followed by small not-for-profit organizations?*
- *Are the current social media practices of these organizations effective?*
- *What are the primary needs of these organizations in terms of social media and how can they be addressed?*

I use three data sources to answer the questions: interviews of managers at selected organizations, the selected organizations' social media feeds and accounts, and the selected organizations' social media communications policies and procedures. However, none of the

selected organizations have internal social media communications policies and procedures, but the lack thereof will be analyzed, as that in and of itself has the potential to speak loudly of the current positions of the organization in regard to how the organization approaches and handles its social media communications.

How organizations were selected

The organizations examined are small not-for-profit organizations, meaning 501(c)(3) organizations with annual revenue of less than \$1,000,000, as further explained above. A list of all of these qualifying organizations within Lexington, Kentucky was pulled from the “exempt organizations business master file extracts” located on the Internal Revenue Service website (IRS.gov). This excel file was then sorted according to the yearly revenue amount from least to greatest. It was then determined that there are 1,717 total 501(c)(3) organizations in Lexington, and of those, 1,178 had a yearly revenue of less than \$1,000,000. The data had been updated on March 11th, 2019.

Even though all 1,178 of these organizations qualify as small, there is still a large range between organizations with annual revenue of \$0 and \$999,999. Therefore, to ensure that organizations throughout the range of revenue sizes within this small size category are examined, the organizations were divided into three categories and organizations were selected from within each category. To divide the range into three equal categories based on annual revenue, the three categories are \$0-\$333,333 (category A), \$333,334- \$666,666 (category B), and \$666,667-\$999,999 (category C). Within the 1,717 organizations, 1,065 of them are in category A, 81 are in category B, and 32 are in category C. Two organizations will be randomly selected from each of these three categories. Only two were selected from each class to allow time for a year’s worth

of 3 social media platforms' feeds to be studied. The randomized selection was done within excel. This will help highlight differences that could be linked to the variance in revenue amount. The selected organizations in the smallest monetary category (category A) are Hearts Inc. and Ten Kids Inc. The selected organizations in category B are Lexington Philharmonic and Lexington Community Radio. The selected organizations in category C are Green Forests Work Inc. and Explorium of Lexington.

How interview data were analyzed

The primary manager of the social media communications at each selected organization was interviewed. If a selected organization has no social media presence and no social media manager, the director of the organization was still interviewed. The questions within the interviews are listed below:

1. What social media platforms are used by your organization?
2. How does your not-for-profit determine what social media platform(s) to use?
3. Does your organization use any guides in regard to social media usage?
4. Does the organization have its own communications policies and/or procedures?
5. Who is the target audience of the social media posts?
6. Does the target audience vary with each post?
7. Does the target audience vary with each platform?
8. What are the standards in regard to post frequency?
9. What goals does this organization have for its social media?
10. Are social media evaluations conducted?

Their answers were recorded and coded by documenting what category each answer falls in for each individual question. This data was then used to show the potential differences between what these managers think they are doing in terms of social media usage versus what I determine is actually produced through direct analysis of the social media feeds. The guide will be able to help fill in any gaps between manager's perceptions, expectations, and goals and the reality of their organization's social media usage.

How social media data was analyzed

For each selected organization, its social media platforms (within the sites of Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter as explained above) are analyzed for the calendar year of 2018. A year's worth of content is examined to get a full picture of how frequently the organization makes posts and to fully encompass the content and types of posts throughout the year. The topics examined will be:

- The type of posts (i.e. original, reply, or share)
- The content/purpose of the posts
- The frequency of posts
- The amount of interactions (i.e. likes, shares, comments) with each post

This data will then reveal both the needs/shortcomings and successes of the social media managers, and their revealed preferences. This information will then be directly addressed in the guide/recommendations I created.

How social media communications policies and procedures will be analyzed

If an organization has social media communications policies and procedures, the information about those will be analyzed. It will be studied to determine effectiveness by examining if it addresses the needs of a small not-for-profit social media manager(s), and by determining if it is efficiently up to date. Additionally, if an organization does not have any social media communications policies and/or procedures, this was noted.

V. Analysis and Findings of Social Media Feeds

Each of the organization's social media feeds were analyzed in regard to the types of posts, the amount of interaction, and the projected purpose. The specific criterion used for analysis is discussed below for each of these categories, along with the findings.

The types of posts for Facebook and Twitter can be broken down into two categories: original posts and shares. Only original posts are possible within Instagram, so the category of shares does not apply to it. On Twitter, shared posts are known as "retweets." Original posts are when the user first posted the content. A share is when a user posts the content of another user, including the original posters' user name. Retweets are a valuable way to show support and build relationships with other organizations or individuals. "Retweet others- by retweeting content from organizations that you respect and value, you will increase the chances of them retweeting yours" (Ibrisevic, 2018). The notion of the high value of retweets is also reflected in research from Stanford (2010), as they determined retweets are a high value content type as they are related to allowing more views of the content which could link to the content going viral. The appropriate numerical balance between the two types of posts is hard to definitively define. According to research by Byrom (2018), 50% of the content should be shares/retweets, and the

other 50% should be original. This goal will be used to evaluate the not-for-profit organizations in regard to the types of posts they make, as seen below.

	Hearts Inc.	Ten Kids Inc.	Lexington Community Radio	Lexington Philharmonic	Green Forests Work Inc.	Explorium of Lexington
Facebook	88% = original 11%=shares	No posts in 2018	47%= original posts 53% = shares	84% = original 16%= shares	82%= original 18%= shares	99% = original 1%= shares
Twitter	No posts in 2018	No Twitter account	No Twitter account	100% = original 0%= retweets	No Twitter account	No Twitter account

As shown above, all but one of the organizations clearly struggle with hitting near the 50/50 balance. Therefore, this is an issue that is addressed in the guide.

It is also important to get a better understanding of the purposes that each post could serve. After analyzing the posts of the six organizations, it was determined that every post fits into one or more of the following categories: seeking volunteers, seeking donations, providing informing/engaging content, providing an opportunity to participate, and building connections with current stakeholders. It is possible for some posts to contain more than one type of content and purpose within a single post. When not-for-profit managers are creating social media content, these purposes should be considered and intentionally selected in accordance with the goals of the social media and of the overall organization. According to McCollin (2018), the majority of posts should add something of usefulness or value to the reader in order to increase engagement with the posts. This fits with the category of providing informing/engaging content,

which is for the benefit of the reader. In order to assess and compare the distribution of the content types, the projected purposes for each organization are outlined below.

In order to find out what purpose these not-for-profit organizations use their social media for, each post was analyzed to find which of the 5 previously mentioned purposes the post served. This analysis was done keeping in mind that existing recommendations claim that informing/engaging content designed for the reader are more likely to gain interactions with other users (McCollin, 2018). A post can contain more than one purpose. Therefore, instead of counting the number of posts on each platform, the number of purposes were totaled. For example, one post may ask for donations and volunteers. This would count as two purposes being used. The purposes were then analyzed to find out how often each purpose is utilized by percentage. This was done for 3 platforms: Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. The results are as follows.

Twitter data:

	Hearts Inc.	Ten Kids Inc.	Lexington Community Radio	Lexington Philharmonic	Green Forests Work Inc.	Explorium of Lexington
Seeking volunteers	N/A	N/A	N/A	0%	N/A	N/A
Seeking donations	N/A	N/A	N/A	17.5%	N/A	N/A
Providing informing/engaging content	N/A	N/A	N/A	40%	N/A	N/A
Providing an opportunity to participate	N/A	N/A	N/A	25%	N/A	N/A
Building connections with current stakeholders	N/A	N/A	N/A	17.5%	N/A	N/A

Facebook data:

	Hearts Inc.	Ten Kids Inc.	Lexington Community Radio	Lexington Philharmonic	Green Forests Work Inc.	Explorium of Lexington
Seeking volunteers	2%	N/A	<1%	0%	8%	<1%
Seeking donations	26%	N/A	9%	1%	14%	5%
Providing informing/engaging content	47%	N/A	80%	55%	58%	94%
Providing an opportunity to participate	9%	N/A	2%	44%	20%	0%
Building connections with current stakeholders	16%	N/A	9%	0%	0%	<1%

Instagram data:

	Hearts Inc.	Ten Kids Inc.	Lexington Community Radio	Lexington Philharmonic	Green Forests Work Inc.	Explorium of Lexington
Seeking volunteers	8%	N/A	0%	0%	0%	0%
Seeking donations	62%	N/A	25%	1%	0%	0%
Providing informing/engaging content	46%	N/A	37.5%	34%	86%	0%
Providing an opportunity to participate	46%	N/A	37.5%	30%	0%	100%
Building connections with current stakeholders	38%	N/A	0%	1%	14%	0%

Though organizations need to post with intention, social media data can also be analyzed based on how frequently they post. The frequency of posts by each organization is shown below by listing the total number of posts per platform.

	Hearts Inc.	Ten Kids Inc.	Lexington Community Radio	Lexington Philharmonic	Green Forests Work Inc.	Explorium of Lexington
Facebook	27	N/A	579	145	34	485
Twitter	N/A	N/A	N/A	40	N/A	N/A
Instagram	13	N/A	20	66	6	2

Another metric that is important to understand is in regard to posts frequency. There are different ideal frequencies for each platform (Patel, 2016). Based on the successful high engagement rates of posts from social media accounts, it is recommended to make 2 posts per day for maximum effectiveness in terms of engagements, if the profile has more than 10,000 likes on Facebook. If it has less than 10,000, then posting 1-5 times per month is the most effective way to get increased engagement. Hearts Inc. and Green Forests Works Inc. meet this recommendation, while the others over posted.

For Twitter, 1-5 tweets per day leads to the highest engagement per post (Patel, 2016). None of the above organizations reach this. For Instagram, the frequency recommendation is less numerical. It has been determined that the amount does not matter, but rather being consistent in whatever amount is decided upon is important. (Patel, 2016). These amounts were determined as effective because influential social media users did them successfully, achieving many interactions and followers.

The amount of interactions was measured to determine the success of the posts because the goal of not-for-profit organizations use of social media should include engagement with the

members of the target audience (Johnston, 2017). Therefore, a high amount of all interaction types (likes, comments, shares) is considered desirable. The criteria for determining whether or not to consider the amount as high will be done by comparing the amount of interaction to the not-for-profit average for each platform. For Facebook, this average is 0.17%. For Instagram, it is 2.14%, and for Twitter, it is 0.055%. These averages were determined through a study by the social analytics organization Rival IQ (2018).

The interaction amount averages for the six selected organizations are listed below. The calculations were conducted according to the same method used in the Rival IQ study. The method was summing the total amount of interactions for the year of 2018 and dividing that number by the total number of posts for 2018. That number was divided by the total number of profile likes/followers, which equals the final average, which is listed below. If the calculated average is greater than the Rival IQ not-for-profit average, it is shaded in grey.

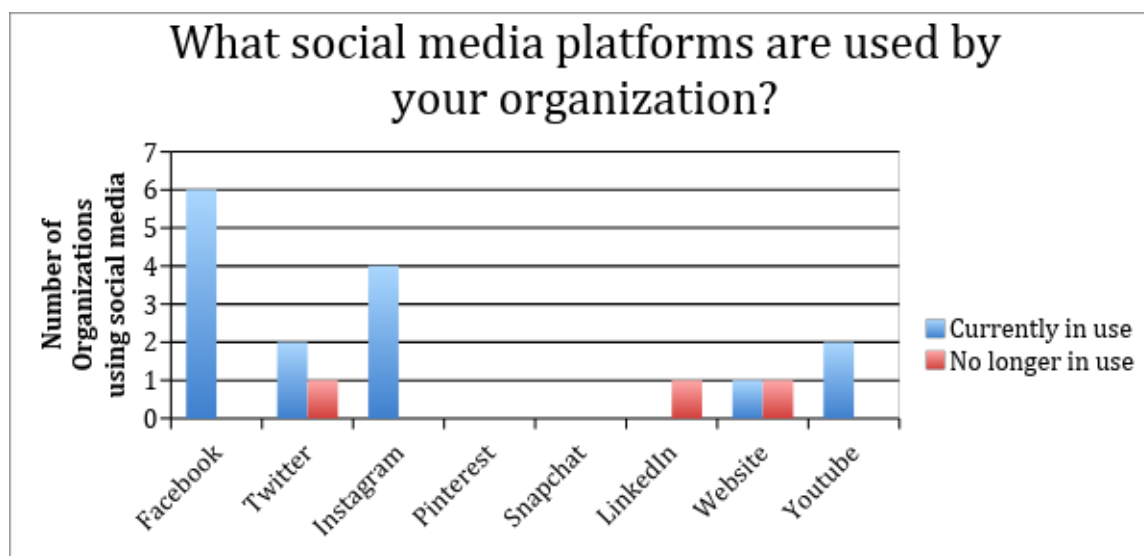
	Hearts Inc.	Ten Kids Inc.	Lexington Community Radio	Lexington Philharmonic	Green Forests Work Inc.	Explorium of Lexington
Facebook	.02%	N/A	.14%	.3%	1.9%	.10%
Twitter	N/A	N/A	N/A	3.6%	N/A	N/A
Instagram	12.4%	N/A	3.7%	6.5%	13.1%	.048%

According to these results, the majority of these organizations meet the standard of a high amount of interactions. The result that not-for-profit organizations overall do not struggle in this area is echoed by the results found by Rival IQ, as their calculated average for not-for-profits is higher than the all-industry average for all three platforms. However, some small not-for-profit organizations still do struggle with achieving a high amount of interaction with their posts. Therefore, this is addressed within the guide.

As seen in the above analysis and findings, eight accounts achieved the goal of having an interaction rate higher than the industry average. It is impossible to know for certain what the root causes or motivations are of those who contribute to certain posts receiving high levels of interaction. However, recommendations made by successful social media experts claim that informing/engaging content designed to provide the reader with something is more likely to receive interactions (McCollin, 2018). Keeping this in mind could help organizations post with specific purpose in an attempt to increase their rate of interaction.

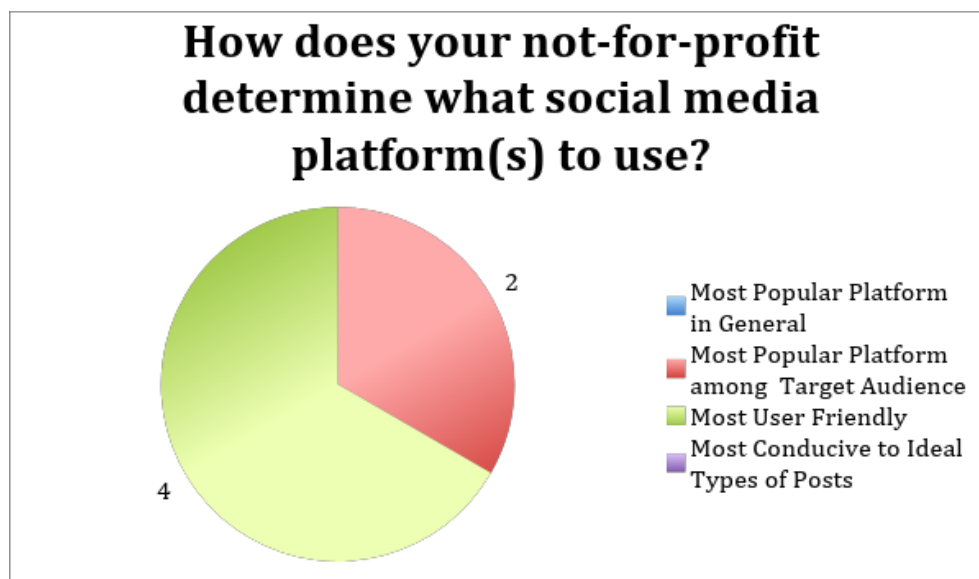
VI. Analysis and Findings of Interviews

The answers from all 6 of the organizations for each of the interview questions are shown below in charts. Along with each of the charts is a written explanation of the implications of the findings.

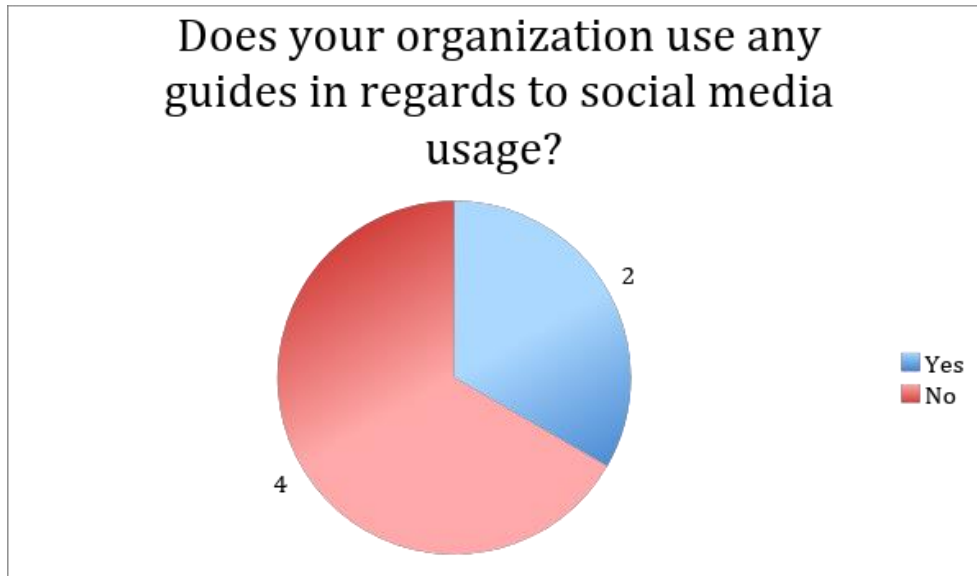


Not all of the organizations are utilizing all three of the most popular platforms. But all of them are using Facebook. If this decision was made strategically, considering factors such as the

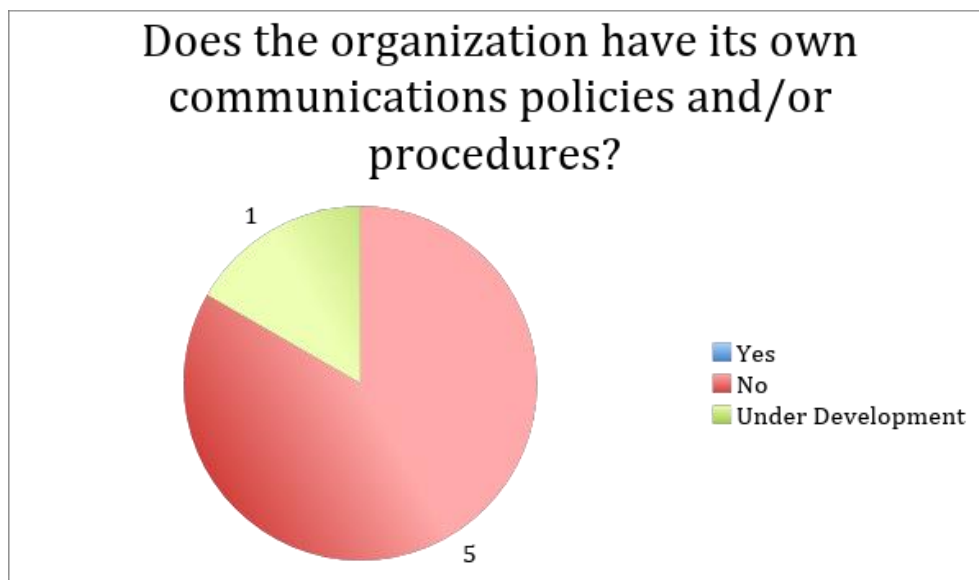
target audience, or the ability of the platform to offer needed features, this may then be determined to be the best for the organization. However, as seen below, that was not how the organizations always made this decision.



By picking the platform that is easiest to navigate, the not-for-profit manager may be overlooking the importance of choosing the platform based on the ability of it to accomplish the intended purpose of the posts. Ideally, every not-for-profit organization would take into account the platforms that their target audience is using. By choosing to use the platform that is easiest, the managers of these accounts are not effectively using their time if this is not the platform that will reach their target audience. Therefore, not effectively choosing which social media platforms to utilize is a problem that is addressed in the guide.

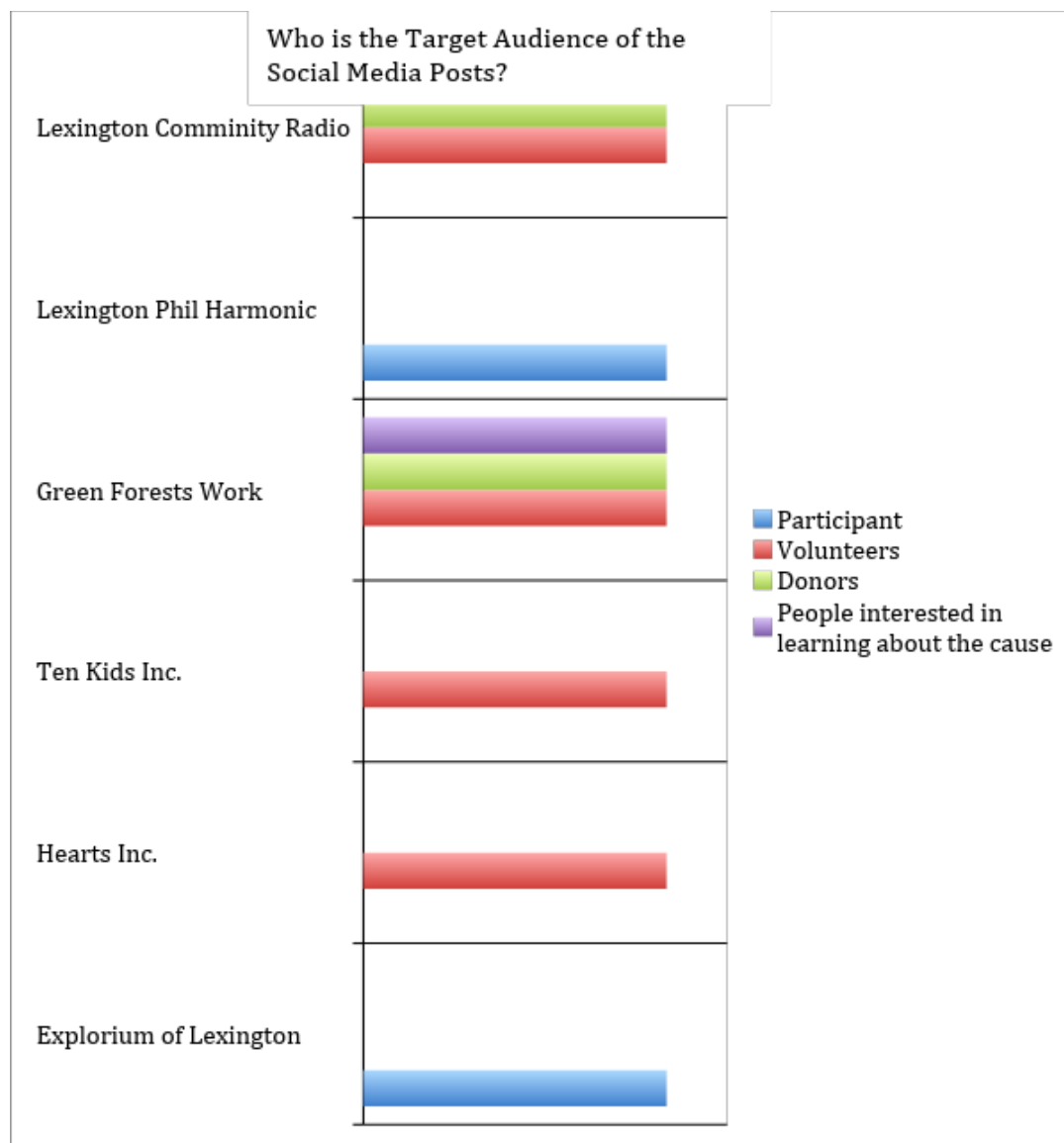


The lack of usage of guides may be due to lack of being informed about guides designed specifically for their needs. Providing managers with a guide will help to fill a need that they may or may not even realize they have.



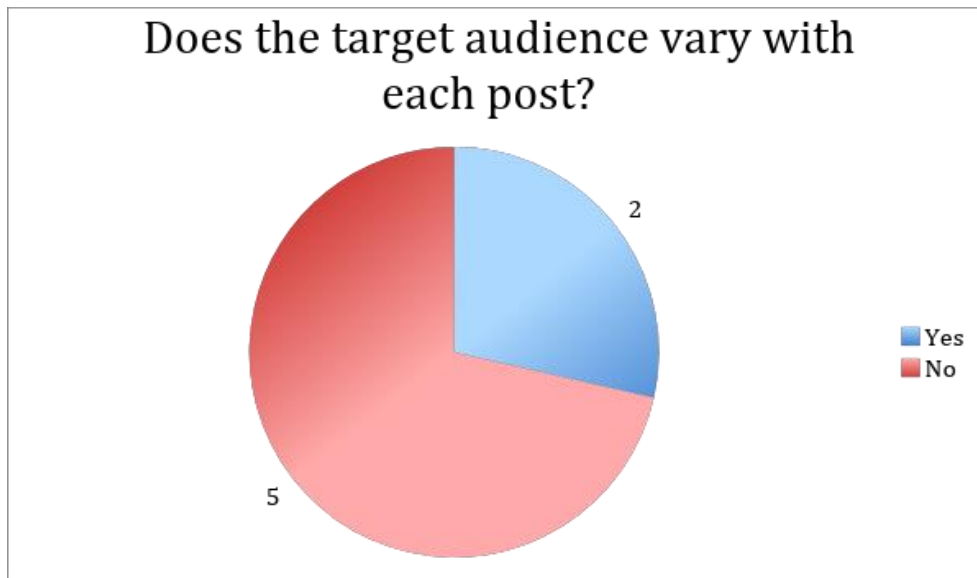
If any of the organizations had their own communications policies and/or procedures, they were going to be used as a data source. However, the fact that none had any reflects the

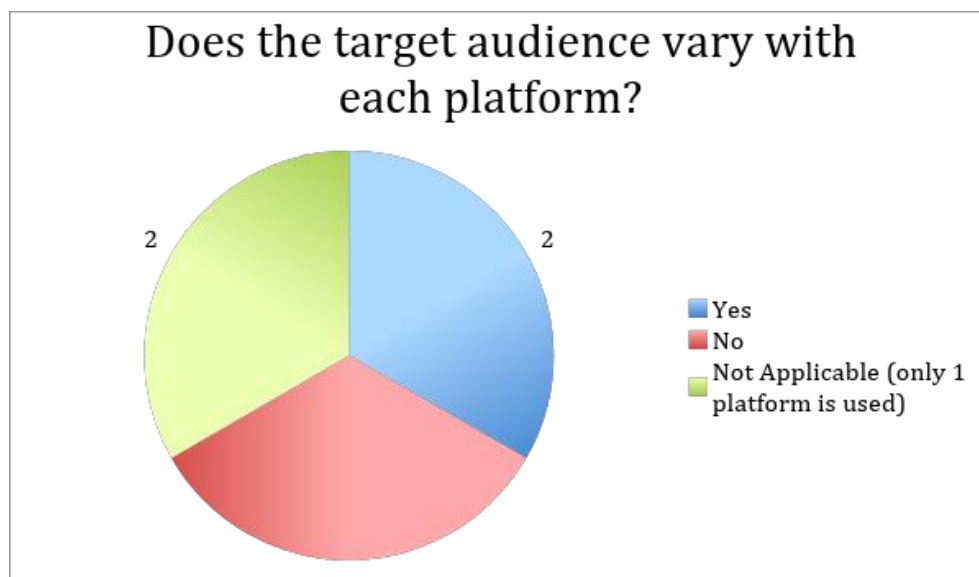
unstructured approach that these organizations take in regard to social media usage. It is feasible to think that a communications guide would inspire the managers to make social media communications a higher priority, which could lead to the creation of such policies and procedures.



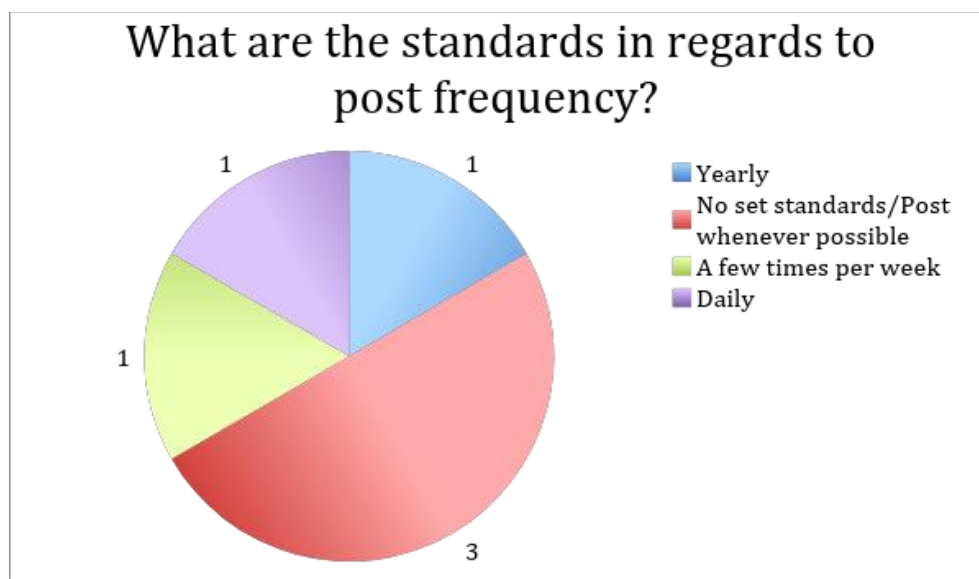
Who the target audience is should be considered when the organization selects the platform and the content of the messages. The above graph shows that the intended target

audience varies greatly among the organizations. Target audience should be assessed with each post and should have an effect on the type of content that is created, along with which platform(s) are used to deliver it. This also shows some examples of target audiences, which could be used to guide managers who struggle with identifying their target audience. Another component of identifying the target audience is to be aware of whether or not it should be re-evaluated with each post or with each platform. The related results are seen below.



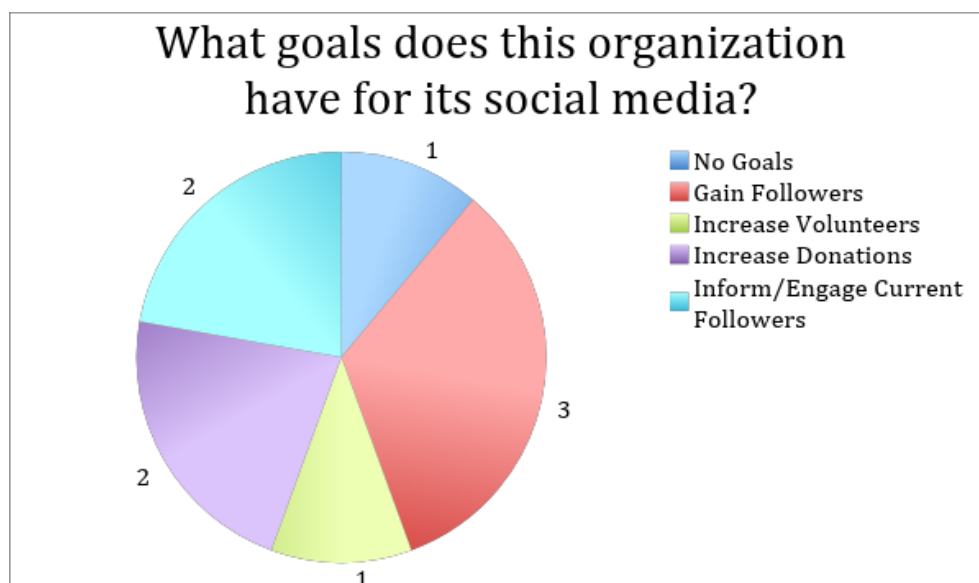


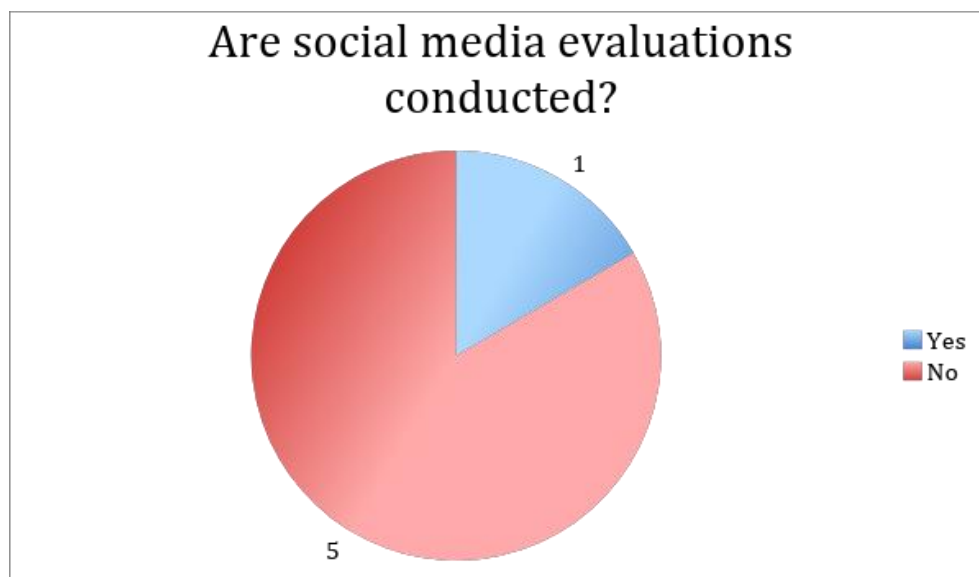
According to the interview information seen below, none of the managers follow the recommended posts frequency as described earlier (Patel, 2016). This is clearly an area with which these managers struggle.



A study by Boon-Long & Wongsurawat (2015) found that measuring the effectiveness of social media marketing is a key element in social media management. Conducting evaluations allows the managers to see how the current practices can be changed and improved as needed. However, five of the six organizations do not conduct social media evaluations. As discussed earlier in the literature review section, one approach to doing this is to use the method of “audience, message, vehicle” (Williamson, 2009).

Additionally, it is important that the organization sets goals for its social media. According to Hoffman and Fodor (2010), “social media objectives drive social media metrics” (p. 43). This is saying that in order for social media to be successful in terms of reaching the intended audience or achieving the intended purpose, specific objectives and goals must be intentionally thought out. Having these goals helps make effective evaluations possible. The distribution of goals of the interviewed organizations is represented in the chart below.





Conducting evaluations of social media is something that should be a priority to organizations that use social media as to assure that the social media usage is contributing to the mission of the organization as opposed to hindering it. People form understandings and opinions of organizations based in part on what they see from the organization on social media. “...data from social media are seen as interesting as they can, when properly treated, assist in achieving customer insight into business decision making” (Immonen, Paakkonen, & Ovaska, 2015, p. 2028). Effectively evaluating the target audience and the messages delivered to them can greatly impact the organization both within social media communications and beyond.

VII. Conclusion

Many problems that small not-for-profits struggle with in terms of social media management are now identifiable. The guide that I have produced directly identifies the problem, and then provides concise solutions. Of course, it is not possible to write an all-encompassing guide while still making it short and easily implementable for these busy managers. However, this guide will help to hit the needs of these organizations that are most crucial to social media

success. The recommended solutions in this guide were concluded upon using the data collected via the interviews, social media feeds, and through the literature review. Ideally, the content of this guide would be presented in an interactive online form, so that it could be quickly found and searchable. However, creating an interactive website is beyond the scope of this capstone.

VIII. Guide/Recommendations:

The following recommendations concerning social media usage are intended for those managing small not-for-profit organizations registered as a 501(c)(3) with an annual revenue of 1 million dollars or less in the United States. These recommendations were compiled by examining existing literature, collecting and analyzing data from small not-for-profits social media accounts, and interviewing managers of these small not-for-profit organizations. This guide addresses possible problems that the organization may be experiences and proceeds to offer solutions to the corresponding problem. Such solutions intend to allow small not-for-profit organizations to use social media as a way to promote and improve the work being done to fulfill their mission.

Problem:

The organization does not effectively choose which social media platforms to utilize.

Solution:

If constraints such as time or resources limit the ability of the organization to only be able to handle managing one or two social media platforms, then the platforms should be chosen with intent and strategy, as proper social media management is an important element of organizational success. Take into consideration which platforms the target audience members use most, along with how well the features of the platform align with the intended purpose. Target audience

members can be thought of both in terms of more general demographics, such as age, and in terms of functionality in relation to the organization, such as volunteer or donors. When thinking in terms of more general demographics, the research by Pew Research Center (2018) of who uses what platforms should be considered. According to Pew Research Center, “roughly two-thirds of U.S. adults (68%) now report that they are Facebook users, and roughly three-quarters of those users access Facebook on a daily basis. With the exception of those 65 and older, a majority of Americans across a wide range of demographic groups now use Facebook” (Smith & Anderson, 2018). Only 35% of U.S. adults use Instagram, but 71% of 18-24 year olds use Instagram, making this age range the most common users of Instagram. While only 24% of U.S adults use Twitter, 40% of 18-29 year olds use Twitter, and 27% of 30-49 year olds use Twitter (Pew Research Center, 2018). This information should be referenced when considering the age ranges of the organization’s target audience in order to decide which social media platforms to use.

It is also important to consider the target audience in terms of their functionality or relationship with the organization when choosing social media platforms. Instagram is a photo-based platform commonly used to showcase events after they have occurred. Showcasing events and accomplished work could effectively be used to showcase volunteers. However, acquiring volunteers should be determined based on the ideal age range of intended volunteers, for example, since the majority of young adults are heavy users of Instagram (Smith & Anderson, 2018). Facebook is best for acquiring monetary donations, as donation buttons are integrated into the platform. Providing informing/engaging content and opportunities to participate can be done across all three platforms, and the type of content can be tailored towards the target audience based on demographics.

Problem:

The organization does not have strategically planned goals in mind for its posts.

Solution:

There are five important purposes to keep in mind when planning social media posts for small not-for-profit organizations:

1. Acquire donations
2. Recruit volunteers
3. Provide informing/engaging content about the organization
4. Promote opportunities to partake in the organization's mission/events
5. Build a connection with current stakeholders

By keeping these purposes in mind, specific goals for each post can be formed to direct the creation of each post. Remember, the majority of the posts should give valuable content to the reader, while the minority should ask something of them (McCollin, 2018). However, both are important to achieving the mission and providing for variety in post content. By determining the goal of the post, you can then match its purpose with the most complementary social media platform(s)

Problem:

Creating content is difficult and time consuming.

Solution:

Keeping in mind the five previously mentioned purposes of the posts (to acquire donations, recruit volunteers, provide informing/engaging content about the organization,

promote opportunities to partake in the organization's mission/events, and build a connection with current stakeholders) can make creating posts seem less overwhelming.

It is also important to consider that 50% of the content should be original, and 50% should be shared (Byrom, 2018). Therefore, one way to create content is to simply find content that has already been posted by users or organizations that would further the sharer's social media goals. The root of the problem of lacking in shares/retweets may simply be lack of awareness of the importance of shares/retweets. Think of retweeting or sharing another organization/user's posts as a way of showing support for them or for their content in a particular post. This is also an easy and fast way to produce more posts, as sharing does not require the creation of original content.

Problem:

Posts receive low interactions from readers/followers

Solution:

Videos are more likely to receive higher interaction. Videos receive 1,200% more shares than photos or text posts (Kaye, 2015). While it is not known for certain that informative/engaging content receives more interactions, it is recommended as a way to serve the reader instead of fatiguing the reader by constantly asking something of them such as to donate financial resources. as they in their nature are more engaging than photos or written texts.

While it is not known for certain that informative/engaging content receives more interactions, it is recommended as a way to serve the reader instead of fatiguing the reader by constantly asking something of them or providing repetitive content. Videos in their nature are more engaging than photos or written texts and receive 1,200% more shares than photos or text

posts (Kaye, 2015). Searching and using hashtags also allows for the organization to find relevant content to share and allow users interested in the organization's mission to find the organization's profiles. By using this strategy, a small not-for-profit organization can initiate engagement with the community to generate a group of engaged followers. In order to best do this, keep in mind that, for Twitter, 1-5 tweets each day creates the highest engagement per post (Patel, 2016). For Facebook, producing 2 posts per day helps to achieve the highest amount of engagements if the profile has more than 10,000 likes. However, if the profile has less than 10,000 likes then only posting 1-5 times per month increases engagement (Patel, 2016).

Problem:

Evaluations are not conducted regarding the success of the organization's social media usage.

Solution:

Evaluate social media usage through the perspectives of "audience, the content of the messages, and the vehicle of delivery" (Williamson, 2009, p. 9). Evaluate whether the target audience matches with the content and platform to help determine if the goals of the organization are being achieved through the social media usage. Evaluate the content based on the amount of interactions received. Look for trends of what is successful for your organization in accordance with interaction levels. Evaluate whether or not the appropriate vehicle of delivery was chosen according to the intended purpose of the post.

Problem:

The organization does not make frequent posts.

Solution:

The organization lacking a helpful target goal for frequency of posts may be to blame. Set a realistic and achievable goal, tailored to the abilities of your organization. Use a free scheduling service, specially Hootsuite, TweetDeck, Postfity, or Buffer, to create the content during a time that is convenient (Guevara, 2018). Also, social media posts can be used to supplement the other work being done by the organization. Therefore, instead of waiting for big events or changes to post about, update the public on the organization's progress as work is being done. This can help to let the public know how seriously the organization takes its mission and make the work and posts worthwhile. Since the organization is also planning and working, there can always be content posted about these things frequently.

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